

### EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. Claims 1-15, 33-34 and 43-49 directed to an allowable product. Pursuant to the procedures set forth in MPEP § 821.04(B), claims 33, 45, directed to non elected Species, previously withdrawn from consideration as a result of a restriction requirement, claims 33, 45 hereby rejoined and fully examined for patentability under 37 CFR 1.104.

Because all claims previously withdrawn from consideration under 37 CFR 1.142 have been rejoined, **the restriction requirement as set forth in the Office action mailed on 5/28/08 is hereby withdrawn.** In view of the withdrawal of the restriction requirement as to the rejoined inventions, applicant(s) are advised that if any claim presented in a continuation or divisional application is anticipated by, or includes all the limitations of, a claim that is allowable in the present application, such claim may be subject to provisional statutory and/or nonstatutory double patenting rejections over the claims of the instant application. Once the restriction requirement is withdrawn, the provisions of 35 U.S.C. 121 are no longer applicable. See *In re Ziegler*, 443 F.2d 1211, 1215, 170 USPQ 129, 131-32 (CCPA 1971). See also MPEP § 804.01.

2. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with William Smith on 7/20/09.

The application has been amended as follows:

In claim 33 please delete word "prosthetic material" and replace with ----- reinforcing material-----.

3. Claims 1-15, 33-34 and 43-49 are allowed.

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The subject matter of the independent claims could either not be found or was not suggested in the prior art of record. The subject matter not found was positioning a reinforcing material over the exposed fascia, re-fixing the vaginal epithelium over the reinforcing material and the fascia, and thereafter locating an intra-vaginal splint into the vagina such that the splint supports the vaginal wall and prevents substantial movement and displacement of the reinforcing material while the re-fixed vaginal epithelium heals, in combination with the other elements (or steps) of the apparatus and method recited in the claims.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

**Conclusion**

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to TARLA R. PATEL whose telephone number is (571)272-3143. The examiner can normally be reached on M-T 6-3.30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patricia Bianco can be reached on 571-272-4940. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Tarla R Patel/  
Examiner, Art Unit 3772

/Michael Phillips/  
Primary Examiner